

'KEEP IN TOUCH', Summer 2020

Copy by, but, if possible, before 1st May 2020

All contributions welcome. Maximum preferred length: 500 words!

(If longer, the editor reserves the right to edit!!)

'Keep In Touch'



SAINT GODRIC

KEEPING YOU 'IN TOUCH' IS

Name

Address

Tel. No.

YOU ARE WELCOME TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THEM

SPRING 2020

***CHURCH & VILLAGE
BIRSTALL & WANLIP***

THE PARISH OF BIRSTALL AND WANLIP

Rector	Please ring 07570 198810 to speak to a churchwarden, while parish is in interregnum.	
Hon Asst. Priests	Revd Sheila Skidmore, 15 School Lane	2673318
	Revd Kerry Emmett, 1 Chamberlains Field	3194736
	Canon Anne Horton, 8b Copeland Road	2677942
	Revd Robin Martin, 22 Sycamore Road	07971632268
	Revd Michael Webb, 31 Bramley Road	07813144645
Churchwardens	Mr Tony Bloxam, 17 Sandgate Avenue	2675381
	Mr John Borrajo, 8 Hallam Avenue	2209289
	Mr John Ward, 28 Walker Road	2677600
	Mrs Debbie Shephard, 41 Roman Road	2672630
Licensed Readers PTO	Mr Peter Chester, 12 Oakfield Avenue	2120236
	Mrs Lesley Walton, 16 The Crossways	2674995
Pastoral Assistants	Mrs Doreen Wilson, 13 Poplar Avenue	2674680
	Mrs Gill Pope, 26 Blenheim Road	2675086
Safeguarding Coordinator	Mrs Annette Marshall	annette.marshall8@gmail.com
Sunday School	Mrs Rose Parrott	rose.parrott@btinternet.com 07811662235
Church Office	Mrs Sheryl Jupp, Church Office, Church Hill	2671797
	<i>email: stjames.birstall@btconnect.com</i>	
Treasurer	Mrs Nicki Wills, Church Office, Church Hill	2671797
	<i>email: stjames.birstall@btconnect.com</i>	
Tower Captain	Mr Clive Mobbs, 30 Wanlip Avenue	2677156
	<i>Practice night—Thursday at 7.30pm</i>	
Wanlip Church Hall Bookings	Mr John Ward, 28 Walker Road	2677600
Nearer Group	Peter and Gill Chester	2120236
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The views and opinions of the authors who have submitted articles to 'Keep in Touch' belong to them alone and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the wider church.

OLD NICK'S COFFEE SHOP

A busy, buzzing, happy place is one way to describe Old Nick's Coffee Shop. The coffee shop is a place to catch up with old friends and make new ones. Over the six years we have been running, we have seen this happening over and over.

It doesn't stop there. If you just want to sit quietly and take it all in, that is equally important. People join us from all over the county. We serve plenty of homemade cakes and copious amounts of tea and coffee, for which a nominal fee is charged. (As we are 'non profit making', our prices are very low).

We always put out the Book Trolley for peoples' enjoyment, and occasionally we have a sales table of our surplus products. Sometimes we also invite someone with a stall supporting a charity. Most months we have a short service in the church for those who wish to participate. When it is warm and dry enough it is lovely and peaceful to have a wander around the church and churchyard. We even sit outside with our coffee!

3rd Tuesdays, 10 am—12.30 pm.

Julie Ward

FROM THE REGISTERS

December 2019 - February 2020

Funerals

19/12	Norman Bates	Wanlip
19/12	Patricia Woolley	L'boro Crem
20/1	Gerald Marks	Wanlip, Birstall Cemetery
3/2	Stanley Coley	Gilroes
10/2	Terence Daly	St James'
13/2	Brian Skidmore	Wanlip
27/2	Mary Belton	Wanlip

Service of Celebration

REGULAR EVENTS AND GROUPS

Weekly

- Thursday 7.30-9.00pm **Bell ringing practice (St James')**
Contact Clive Mobbs 0116 2677156
- Saturday 10-12 noon **St James' Church open** + Tea and coffee

Monthly

- 2nd Monday 7.30pm **Monday Group (Village Hall)**
Contact Jane Scott 0116 2673761
- 4th Monday 10.15am **Mothers' Union (St James')**
Contact Helen Tarry 0116 2677493
- 3rd Tuesday 10am -12.30 **Old Nick's Coffee Shop**
Wanlip Church and Community Centre

Other Groups

- Group agrees dates! **St James' Striders** approx. 8 miles
Contact Gill Pope 0116 2675086

St James' Wanderers are currently not wandering

Contact Lesley Walton for information

REGULAR SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

St James, Birstall Sundays

8 am Holy Communion (*said*)
 10 am All Together (*1st Sunday*)
 10 am Parish Communion (*other*
Suns) 10 am Sunday School

Weekdays

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,
Friday 9 am Morning Prayer
Thurs. 9.30 am Holy Communion

Our Lady & St Nicholas, Wanlip Sundays, 6 pm

1st Sunday

Holy Communion

2nd, 3rd, 4th Sundays

Prayer Book Evensong

5th Sunday

Alternative Service of the Word

INTERREGNUM

What do you think of it so far?

Yes, we all miss Vince, but he has gone, and we all wish him well in his new role. We now have to concentrate on the present, and the future.

Hopefully everything seems to be jogging along pretty much as normal. Your Church Wardens, who are responsible for keeping the parish running, may appear to be floating calmly on the water, but we are paddling furiously below the surface!

We have been massively blessed in having four retired clergy in the parish who, despite being retired, are very willing to lead us in worship week by week. A big thank you to Anne, Kerry, Michael and Robin. We are, however, conscious that we should not take their cooperation for granted, and so be prepared to seek additional clergy help elsewhere. The wardens are also responsible for the upkeep of the Rectory and are making regular visits to ensure that all is in order there.

But what about a new Rector? First of all there is a requirement to produce a 'Parish Profile', a word picture of the parish to give prospective candidates an idea of who we are and what we do. This is currently being written, and, with the approval of the Parochial Church Council, we will then be able to advertise the vacancy. Do not expect any quick fixes. It could well be the end of the year before a prospective candidate is approved and offered the post.

We can all do our bit in keeping standards up and ensuring that we maintain an open and welcoming church, to all comers, at all times. The Church Wardens are committed to serving the Parish to the best of their abilities throughout this Interregnum. In the words of the song; **'Be bold. Be strong. For the Lord your God is with you.'**

Your Church Wardens

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

WOMEN LED, GLOBAL, ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

6th MARCH 2020

The World Day of Prayer, formerly known as the Women's World Day of Prayer, is celebrated on the first Friday in March all over the world. It was started in the 19th century when mission boards were largely male. Christian women in North America began working with women and children in foreign and home missions. Within these initiatives women started praying with one another, and days of prayer started to emerge.

In 1910 a series of events across America, celebrating 50 years of women's missionary activity, drew people together, and eventually led to a united day of prayer on the first day of Lent. In 1926 this idea was distributed to other countries and the World Day of Prayer had begun. The date changed from the first Friday in Lent to the first Friday in March as it was considered more suitable for the Orthodox churches.

Today around 120 countries take part and the service is translated into more than 90 languages. Each country has its own national committee. Every year a country is chosen to write the service and is allocated a theme. The 2020 service has been prepared by the Christian women of Zimbabwe and the theme is

Rise! Take your Mat and Walk.



VILLAGE VOICES

As you can see from our cover, our church magazine is hopefully of interest to members of both our church and our village communities. We would love to be able to include some stories from the various village institutions as well as from all our village churches. Previous editions of our church magazine have included articles from members of the village community, including shop owners and members of the parish council. Some have spoken of their history in the village, others of how it feels to serve the village through their various businesses and roles.

It would be good to hear your voices and your stories in our magazine. How is life in Birstall for you now? What difference have the occasional 'late night' shopping events made? How can our readers support your businesses?

Have you a story to tell? Short articles are always appreciated. Tell us all what is important to you about life in Birstall, and about what's happening in our village.



Email it to the Editor, rahorton@outlook.com, or send it c/o the Church Office, stjames.birstall@btconnect.com, for the attention of **The Editor, 'Keep in Touch'**. Hard copy can be posted through the letter box in St James' Church side door.

Thank you very much.

HOME GROUPS *part 2*

Continuing my first look at Home Groups, these are the final three.

The **Tuesday afternoon group** meets fortnightly at Alastair and Beryl McHugh's home at 2.30 pm for two hours. They have used 100 Stand-alone Bible Studies. When I spoke to Beryl, one of the group was leading studies on the History of the Jews at the time of Jesus. This member had done her own research. At the end of the sessions, tea and cake are much enjoyed. All are welcome to join the group. The **Tuesday evening group** meets at 7.30 pm on the first and third Tuesday evenings of the month. There are about seven members at the moment and they would welcome anyone who would like to join them. They use different homes, with third Tuesdays being at Peter and Gill Chester's home. For some time they have been using 100 Stand Alone Bible Studies which they have found interesting and stimulating.

The **Friday Emmaus Group** has eight members, and they meet about once a month in various homes, where they share a meal. Over the years, they have shared the joys of baptisms, confirmations and weddings, as well as helping each other on very sad occasions. They pray, read, discuss endless topics, learn about the Bible and laugh a lot. Members jotted down something about the group, which they still refer to as the *Emmaus Group*. 'Walking on the road with Jesus as the two disciples did.' 'We meet in the name of the Lord with a shared meal, sometimes a reading with discussion, sometimes just discussion.' 'We met as strangers many years ago for our first meeting at Jane and Shirley Scott's house. The talk and the wine flowed then, as it still does. We have been with each other through both dreadfully sad times and also rejoiced at wonderfully happy times. The faith we share has grown, as has our understanding and our friendship.' 'We share a meal, share views and, most importantly, support and encourage each other, with God's help.'

So there you have them. Six groups to choose from. If you are not already a member of one of the groups, why not give one a try?

Kerry Emmett

Money raised goes towards the work of WDP in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and in grants to Christian projects worldwide.

In Birstall each year a committee of ladies from the Methodist Church, St. Theresa's and St. James prepare and deliver the service. Each church takes it in turn to host the service and in 2020 it is St. James' turn.

The service will be held at St. James the Great Church, Church Hill, Birstall on Friday 6th March 2020. There will be a light lunch at 12 midday followed by a short presentation prepared by the women of Zimbabwe at 1.30 pm. The afternoon service will start at 2 pm. To include as many people as possible, there will be an evening service starting at 7.30 pm. Tea and coffee will be served after this service.

Please put this date in your diary and come and join in the wave of prayer that will travel around the world.

Jackie Bryan

Zimbabwe Overview

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in the southern part of Africa, bordered by South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique. The Zambezi River is the country's longest river, along which are the Victoria Falls – a major tourist attraction. The climate is marked by four seasons: winter, which is cool to cold; summer, hot and dry; rainy season; and the spring season. The country has 16 official languages and English is the first language for only 2% of the people. The British built schools, hospitals, churches and many industries during colonial rule and Christianity was established, but Zimbabwe has since had a very turbulent and unsettled history with high economic inflation, resulting in great poverty. Many children are looked after by extended families after losing parents to HIV and AIDs. Education is not free and children in rural areas are not able to go to school due to poverty and long distances. There is a great need for love, peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

from the WDP website

CTiBW Spring 2020

2020 has got off to a busy and encouraging start with all our three churches invigorated and eager to plan to do things together. We met at St. Theresa's on the 9th January to discuss the forthcoming events, the first of which was the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This always starts on the 18th Jan and goes through to the 25th. It is a difficult one to organise, coming as it does, hot on the heels of Christmas, but a 'pulpit swap' had already been arranged at our previous meeting at the end of October, so there was a plan in place. On Sunday 19th January, for the morning services, Canon Anne went to Birstall Methodist Church, Revd. Paula Hunt to St. Theresa's and Fr. Ted to St. James'.

The feedback I have had from all the congregations and the clergy has been really positive. Everyone seems to have enjoyed the experience and, certainly from St. James' point of view, identified very much with the teaching.

Churches Together UK had provided some excellent resources for the week which had been produced by the church in Malta, where they still celebrate the shipwreck of St. Paul on the 10th February. The theme this year was 'Unusual Kindness' and I would urge you, if you have access to the internet, to look up ctbi.org.uk 'Resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2020.' The readings, prayers and reflections are inspirational at any time.

Another highlight of the week was the 'bring and share' lunch which was hosted by St. Theresa's. It was a lovely relaxed occasion. Fr. Ted started the proceedings with the Grace and Canon Anne rounded things off with readings and prayers taken from the 'Unusual Kindness' resources.

ACCELERATING TIME!!

The phenomenon of our time accelerating as we grow older is not just a phenomenon, it is a truth. Today is a Tuesday, but yesterday it was Friday, I'm sure, and if I turn round too quickly, it will probably be a week Saturday!

As well as accelerating, have you noticed how time is being telescoped? I place the blame on 'market forces' (good to use a bit of 20/21st Century gobble-speak, it will keep the PC brigade happy). It is a ruse to push you into spending what you don't have on stuff you don't want (or need).

For instance, just a couple of weeks after the blur that was Christmas, and probably before the New Year even, hot-cross buns and Easter-themed things were appearing in the supermarkets. Probably before the end of February of this year, Christmas things will be re-appearing, with posters shouting 'Only 357 days to Christmas' (or whatever) plastered all over the place. Newspapers will have pages devoted to 'What to get him/her/the dog for Christmas'. And 'have you even tried to book your summer holiday for this particular year? Everywhere you want to go will be just about fully booked when the brochures drop on your mat, by people who booked last year; so you had better start on Summer 2021 NOW'.

Sooner rather than later, I think when a child is born, it will be a good idea to present it with about 70 birthday cards all at once, and say 'Pick one out when you feel a birthday coming on! You never know when it will be'.

Let me, then, be the first to wish you a Merry Holiday, Good Christmas and Happy Easter and I hope you have a lovely Birthday.

May all your days be blessed and jolly, whenever they are.

Leigh Reid

NOT OUT OF HIS WAY ...

When I met Harry, he was walking into town. He explained that he had been to lunch with friends at a particular cafe and now he was going shopping.

I was confused. He was actually heading in the direction of the cafe that he claimed he had just come from. I challenged this, and he admitted that he'd seen a man, carrying two heavy bags, walking with a stick and shaking from the exertion. So Harry had walked with him, past the shop he had intended visiting, all the way to the man's home. Now he was on his way back. He ended by adding 'It wasn't out of my way'.

'It was a hundred and eighty degrees and a mile out of your way!' I protested. 'Oh, sure' he laughed, with a twinkle in his eye that suggested he had caught me out. 'I was out of my way. But today I have been practising walking with God. And it wasn't out of His way at all.'

Story submitted by Rita Cowham

A.S.A.P. ALWAYS SAY A PRAYER

There's work to do, deadlines to meet, you've got no time to spare. But as you hurry and scurry, A.S.A.P. Always say a prayer.

It may seem like your worries are more than you can bear, Slow down, take a breather, A.S.A.P. Always say a prayer.

In the midst of family chaos, 'quality time' is rare. Do your best, let God do the rest, A.S.A.P. Always say a prayer.

God knows how stressful life is, He wants to ease our cares. And he'll respond to all your needs. A.S.A.P. Always say a prayer.

Author unknown

LENT AND EASTER

COURSES and EVENTS FOR ALL

St. James' and Our Lady and St. Nicholas are running a five week York Course called '**On the Third Day.**' It will be on Wednesday evenings at 7.30 pm, starting on the 4th March at St. James', with an afternoon session at 3 Woodgate Drive. St. Theresa's will be celebrating the **Stations of the Cross** at 6.30 pm on each Friday of Lent. As plans are finalised there will be more information available through the three churches' notice sheets

Rev. Paula Hunt is organizing a Lent Course, '**Not a Tame Lion**', which is based on the writings of CS Lewis. It is open to all three churches, and will take place at 6 pm on Sunday evenings during Lent in the Methodist Church Lounge.

On Thursday 30th January, Fr. Ted showed the first **DVD about Catholicism**. The next one, which is about **the teaching of Christ**, will be shown on the 27th February at St Theresa's at 7 for 7.30 pm.

**Good Friday
Walk of Witness**



Please join us on our Ecumenical 'Walk of Witness.' On Good Friday morning, 10th April, it starts at 10 am outside Tesco's, by the traffic lights on Sibson Road, and ends with hot cross buns at St. Theresa's Church.

Debbie Shephard

ECUMENICAL EVENTS

at St Theresa's Roman Catholic Church

ALL INVITED

Stations of the Cross are celebrated every Friday for six weeks following Ash Wednesday. Commencing February 28th at 6.30 pm followed by evening Mass. Everyone is welcome.

Themes of Catholicism

Father Ted is running a course of ten DVDs on themes of Catholicism by Bishop Robert Barron. The next session is on February 27th from 7.00pm to 8.30pm in the Parish Hall at St Theresa's. Everyone is invited.

Passover Supper

Wednesday April 8th St Theresa's will be holding a **Passover Supper** starting at 6.30pm. This event is a ticket only event. Please speak to your Churches Together representative if you are interested in attending.



acquaintance come to this place again; nor dare to encroach on what was meant for the need of the poor.' And so it happened.

Saint Godric and the Hunted Stag

In the time of Rainulf, Bishop of Durham, certain of his household had come out for a day's hunting with their hounds, and were following a stag which they had singled out for its beauty. The creature, hard pressed by the clamour and the baying, made for Godric's hermitage, and seemed by its plaintive cries to beseech his help. The old man came out, saw the stag shivering and exhausted at his gate, and moved with pity bade it hush its moans, and, opening the door of his hut, let it go in. The hunters questioned him about the stag; but Godric would not be the betrayer of his guest, and he made prudent answer, 'God knows where he may be.' They looked at the angelic beauty of his countenance, and, in reverence for his holiness, fell before him and asked his pardon for their bold intrusion. But the stag kept house with Godric until the evening, when he let it go free. But for years thereafter it would turn from its way to visit him, and lie at his feet, to show what gratitude it could for its deliverance.

Saint Godric and the Snakes

Charles Kingsley, in his book *The Hermits*, wrote: 'The shingles swarmed with snakes. Men soon told how the snakes obeyed Godric. Two especially huge ones used to lie twined about his legs; till after many years, annoyed by their importunity, he turned them gently out of doors, with solemn adjurations never to return, and they, of course, obeyed.'



Godric Gryffindor.

According to JK Rowling, Godric Gryffindor was one of the founders of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. I wonder why?! To quote from a Harry Potter web-site, *the name Godric is an Anglo-Saxon name in form, and can have several meanings, including, 'he who rules with God' or 'he who rules well'.* Interesting!

Canon Anne

GODRIC

A BRITISH SAINT FOR SPRING TIME

Godric, a popular mediaeval saint, was born to Anglo-Saxon parents in Walpole, Norfolk in c.1065 and died in Finchale, country Durham on 21st May 1170. He's been described as *a colourful figure who, after years of travel as sailor, merchant and pilgrim, eventually settled at Finchale, where he lived to the ripe old age of c. 100*. Some twenty-five years after his death, his hermitage became a priory, the ruins of which still stand, and are looked after by English Heritage.

First a pedlar, then a merchant sailor, Godric, in pursuance of his trade, visited Lindisfarne. At the monastery there he was enthralled by the accounts the monks gave him about St Cuthbert. So much so that he begged God for the grace to be able to be like him. Soon afterward, he went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and on his way back, stopped at Compostella. Not long after, Godric felt called by God to live in the wilderness with another holy man, Godwin. After he died, Godric moved to Finchale and remained in the desert there until he died on the 21 May 1170. This is now his feast day.

Today Godric is best remembered for his kindness toward animals. Many stories recall his protection of the creatures who lived near his forest home. A fellow monk, Reginald of Durham, wrote of his life, not least of his love of animals. (See some of his stories below.) Godric was also a musician. His are the oldest songs in English for which the original musical settings survive. You can read Godric's story in the novel *Godric* by Frederick Buechner. The book was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize, and is still obtainable on Amazon.

Saint Godric and the Hare

To feed the poor, Godric had planted vegetables, which a little hare used to devour stealthily. One day Godric tracked down the culprit and bade the hare to stop as it tried to bolt away. He chastised the trembling animal, bound a bundle of vegetables on its shoulder and sent it off with a warning, 'See to it that neither thyself nor any of thy

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Afternoon Teas

at Birstall Methodist Coffee Shop, bi-monthly 2.30-4pm
2020: 4 Apr, 6 Jun, 1 Aug, 3 Oct, 5 Dec

If you, or someone close to you, is experiencing some loss of memory, or if you are feeling isolated or lonely, then come and join us. 'Down Memory Lane' is very informal. It begins at 2.30 pm - no worries if you are a bit early or late. You will be welcomed by one of our helpers who will invite you to sit down at one of the tables and when we think everyone has arrived, we have entertainment which always involves music and singing together. After about 15 minutes, tea and home-made cakes are served. After tea, after more entertainment and more time to chat, it's time to go home at 4 pm. So, if you think you would like to join us, we would love to see you!

To find out more, contact [Janet Bradford 0116 267 1471](mailto:Janet.Bradford@birstallmethodist.org.uk).

LUNCH CLUB

Birstall Methodist Church on Wednesdays

ALL WELCOME

11.30am onwards. Meet in the Lounge for a get-together and a chat.
12.30pm. Lunch is served in the Concert Hall (a hot 2-course meal followed by tea or coffee) - £6.50

Transport by mini-bus within Birstall can be arranged. - £2.50

Anyone of retirement age will be most welcome to join us. Lunch Club not only provides a good nourishing home-cooked meal but an opportunity to meet up again with old acquaintances or to make new friends.

Socialising is important!

For more information contact [Mary on 0792 8864586](mailto:Mary@birstallmethodist.org.uk)

UNUSUAL KINDNESS

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2020

There was something special about the 'Week of Prayer for Christian Unity' this year. Our three churches swapped pulpits. On January 19th, I took the service at the Methodist Church, Rev. Paula preached at St Theresa's Church, and Father Ted preached at St James' Church. I think we all experienced and rejoiced in 'unusual kindness,' in all three churches.

'Unusual kindness'. That's a fantastic phrase. And it was a fantastic theme for the 2020 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Not least because it left us all with challenging questions.

Where do we receive unusual kindness? When and how do we receive unusual kindness from others? And, very importantly, how and when do we offer unusual kindness to others? It was good to reflect on this theme together, and ecumenically.



When I walked into Birstall Methodist Church ahead of the service, my eyes went immediately to the front of the church where there was an obviously wrecked boat focussing all our attentions. The stage was well set for the church's Sunday Club dramatizations of the first two readings: 'Storm at Sea' and 'Drifting' (Acts 27: 18-32)

St. Philip's Education Team have also organised Golden Mile walking tours, a number of 'Meet the Faith' school visits, where one faith practitioner goes into a school for classroom visits, and also 'Living the Faith' events, where the children come to us and visit places of worship. For example, where I am based, as a near neighbours faith practitioner in Clarendon Park Leicester, we arrange visits from the church to the local mosque, gurdwara, mandir and synagogue.

Faith engagement is a two way process – and we do invite feedback. The most frequent comments we get are from pupils as they see us laughing and joking together whilst having our school lunch, which is always delicious, or chatting and helping each other as we pack away to load up our transit van at the end of the day, 'It's amazing to see how these people of different religions get on so well together.'

Amen to that, and may we all see the face of God, in both friend and stranger.

Sheila Roberts

Burns' Night Supper at Wanlip

On January 25th we hosted a Burns' Night Supper in the Hall at Wanlip, in honour of Robert Burns, but also to raise funds for the Church. Twenty-five guests sat down to a meal prepared and served by the four members of the 'Ward Clan'.



The Menu

Smoked Salmon Terrine with Garnish &
Oat Cakes or Scotch Broth & Cob
Haggis/Tatties & Neeps, served with a
Whiskey Sauce
Crannachan or Cheesecake
Cheese & Biscuits
Tea or Coffee. Shortbread & Tablet

All was washed down with wine and whiskey. A good time was had by all. There are already requests for a repeat next year!

Julie & John

My Passion for Interfaith Engagement

For many years I have been involved in various ways with the work of the St. Philip's Centre, Leicester. This grew mainly out of a feeling of wanting to learn more about my neighbours, and also learn more about the children I was teaching at school. I began tentatively, by joining the Hindu-Christian Dialogue Group. After retirement from full-time teaching, I have taken a Masters degree in inter-religious studies, and have also joined a team of faith practitioners who visit schools for the St Philip's Centre Religion and Beliefs Roadshow.

The Roadshow is always a full day event where our team of nine different Religion and Belief Practitioners, Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Humanist, Jain, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh, commandeers a school hall or dining hall (by invitation) and presents an interfaith experience involving the sights, sounds and fragrances of our various cultures.

Each faith/belief has a table of artefacts. There is also a clothing stall where students can try on a variety of outfits worn by different faiths. And there is a food sampling stall and music.

Throughout the day classes are brought in to view the table displays, handle the artefacts and ask questions of the practitioners. On my table, I would have amongst other things: a holding cross, a paschal candle, a youth bible, a chalice and paten. It is important to have items which will be age-related, because, during a whole day at a primary school for example, we would expect to see foundation stage children right through to year 6 pupils. It is an opportunity to have face to face encounters with people of a religion or belief that the students have only read about in school text books, And a real chance to ask questions.

During 2019 we have held sixteen roadshows engaging with 382 students over the age of 18, and 5,432 pupils under 18 years of age. We have visited schools and colleges in Lincolnshire, Rutland, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.

Inside the wrecked boat there was a jumble of cardboard boxes, ropes and other things, all symbolizing the stuff that would have to be, and was, jettisoned by the crew!

That 'stage set', together with the actions of the young people inside the boat, also their own version of the bible readings, brought that first century AD storm at sea, and its consequences, alive for us.

Because this was a real live story, and a continuing reality. Because of what happened that day in c. 60 AD, the Christian church was founded in Malta. It has grown over the years, and still thrives. Today's Maltese Christians had written our 2020 ecumenical worship and prayer material from their own faith experience. They were throwing down a challenge to us all. How would our reflections on the unusual kindness of those Maltese people to St Paul and the others on that boat all those years ago, make a difference to our lives now?

We cannot face the storms of life alone. A boat moves forward when all row together. In the face of difficulties, we have to pull together and unite our efforts.

Gracious God, strengthen our confidence in your providence when we feel overwhelmed by the storms of life. Teach us to fix our course on Christ, the True Light who brings us to safe harbour. Transform our many painful separations into harmony, and our mistrust into mutual acceptance. Give us the courage to speak the truth, with justice, in love.

Help us to welcome with unusual kindness our sisters and brothers who are in peril or in need. Change our hearts and the hearts of our Christian communities, that we may be agents of your healing.

Open our eyes to see the whole of creation as your gift, and our hands to share its fruits in generous solidarity. So that together we may proclaim, by word and deed, the wonders of God's saving love.

Canon Anne

SHOEBOX APPEAL 2019

In 2019, 37,400 shoeboxes were delivered in Romania to families and elderly people living in extreme poverty and often in terrible conditions. The gift of our boxes is received with great joy and gratitude. A display at the back of the church has photographs and details of where our boxes went. The new format of the shoeboxes meant that fewer were given last year, but everyone received a similar box. *Link to Hope* would like to send 40,000 in 2020 and are also aiming to send 1,000 Bags of Education to enable children to go to school. In the last 26 years, they have sent 900,000 boxes – some achievement!

We were so pleased that we managed to supply 60 boxes in 2019. 11 of these came from church members and Doreen and Sylvia packed another 49, thanks to the generosity of church members, friends and relations. Collecting has already begun for this year and we are happy to receive any items. We also desperately need wool, as we now have two more people knitting hats, scarves and gloves, so any oddments are very welcome.

As well as shoeboxes, *Link to Hope* were also able to offer critical extra gifts of wood, food and medicine for those most in need. This was made possible by the increase in the delivery charge. Donations towards this are very welcome, as the price for the 49 boxes came to £147.



Do look up the *Link to Hope* website: www.linktohope.co.uk - you will find it an eye opener!

Sylvia Simes

Day 3

Axum, possibly the oldest continually inhabited town south of the Sahara. is the ancient capital of the land of the Queen of Sheba and, possibly, the final resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. We visited the Stelae Park, a field containing over two hundred standing stones and carved obelisks, symbols of power from the 2nd to the 4th century. The Cathedral of Maryam TSION was the first church in Ethiopia, established in the 4th century by King Ezana, when Christianity was adopted as the state religion. The oldest functioning church here was built in the 17th century. The present cathedral was built in the 1960s under Haile Selassie.

According to Ethiopian Orthodox Christian tradition, after the destruction of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant was stolen and taken to Ethiopia. Its final resting place is in a building within the Cathedral compound, kept under lock and key and fiercely guarded by the official guardian priest who is the only person who can enter and approach the Ark. Disaster will befall anyone who tries to enter, and stories exist of people who have tried. Echoes of Indiana Jones! The Ark contains the tablets given to Moses on which the Ten Commandments were written, known as the *tabot*. As no-one has ever seen these, apart from their successive guardians, they may or may not be there. But the Ethiopian church definitely affirms their presence. Every Orthodox Church in Ethiopia has a replica of the *tabot* kept in their Holy of Holies, only able to be accessed by the priests. Every year at Epiphany the *tabots* are taken out and paraded round the churches. At Axum, the actual Ark is taken out, or is it? Most likely it is too precious to leave its home, if, that is, it exists at all.

Being Sunday, we were keen to celebrate Communion. Not being able to use any of the religious buildings, our guide found us a clear space in the Stelae Field, keeping everyone else away from that area. Sharing Communion in that place, near to where the early Christians in Ethiopia would have celebrated, was very special.

To be continued

Gill Pope

But people come and go and very few actually take Communion. We were asked to leave before the Communion. On leaving we noticed many women were sitting in the courtyard. Women are not allowed into churches or to take Communion when menstruating, so were worshipping outside.

Inside the cathedral we visited the austere black polished stone tombs of The Emperor Haile Selassie and his wife.



Haile Selassie Tomb, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, December 2, 2014



In the afternoon we visited the National Museum and the 3.5 million year old bones of Lucy, discovered in 1974, at the time the oldest human-like skeleton to be found. I had been very interested in this at the time and so it was extremely interesting to be able to see it.

Day 2

The next morning we were up early for our flight to Mekele followed by a 45 minute drive to Wukro. Here we visited two churches, thought to be 10thC, rock-cut from the surrounding sandstone cliffs. After lunch we had a very long drive to our night's hotel and the next day a 4 hour drive to Axum. The scenery is wonderful, mountains, gorges and terracing. Some of the roads are excellent, others just dirt tracks. The views were spectacular.

We often came across children walking their goats and sheep along the road looking to find somewhere for them to graze. Education in Ethiopia is free, but in rural areas, due to poverty and a lack of school places, children often only attend for half a day, if at all. For the rest of the time they tend the livestock, work in the fields, or harass tourists.

It was amazing that wherever we stopped a group of children would appear from nowhere!



NIKOLAUSTAG

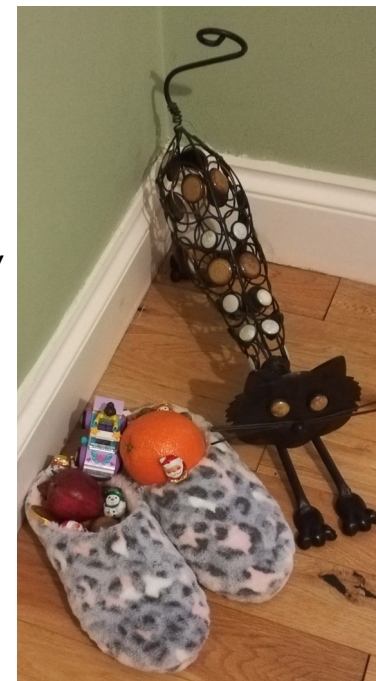
St. Nicholas, the German Way

Celebrating the patron saint of Saint Nicholas' Church at Wanlip on the 6th December 2019 was especially enjoyable, as the service took me back to my childhood days in Bremerhaven, Germany, some sixty years ago.

'Nikolaustag' on 6th December, the feast day of St. Nicholas, was always the first day of a time filled with excitement and anticipation for me during the run up to my birthday on 20th December, and then Christmas Eve on the 24th December. Christmas Eve is the day when Christmas presents are exchanged in Germany to celebrate the arrival of the Christkind (Christchild) or Santa Claus (der Weihnachtsman) depending on your family and the region people live in. That was followed by more presents at the home of my paternal grandparents on Christmas Day.

My sister and I would leave our slippers in the hall in the evening on 5th December, before going to bed full of excitement, due to St. Nicholas' reputation for secret gift-giving. In the morning on the 6th December our slippers would be filled with nuts to crack open, oranges (fresh fruit was very special), a coin and some small chocolates. If we had been especially good there would also be a small toy.

St. Nicholas was used by parents to encourage good behaviour from their children. Often my parents would tease us the night before St. Nicholas Day, checking with us if we had been naughty and whether we were sure that we deserved any treats from St. Nicholas.



This was the time to own up to any naughtiness, which had so far not come to light. And behold, if my sister and I had been naughty, there were no treats the next day. There was either a piece of coal in the slippers or 'eine Rute,' a few twigs bunched together, similar looking to the end of a witch's broom, without the broomstick. Sometimes the 'Rute' would have small pieces of chocolates stuck to it, if the misdemeanour had not been too bad.

'Knecht Ruprecht' or Rupert (farmhand Rupert), so we were told, would accompany St. Nicholas on his journey and come and deal with the naughty children. Names and traditions in respect to St. Nicholas and Knecht Ruprecht vary across Europe. Even within each country, traditions differ greatly. I remember asking my father to clarify whether his name was Rupert or Ruprecht. My dad told me that Rupert had many names and that he had bells on his robe, so people can hear him coming. Some parents apparently tell their children that Knecht Ruprecht is the devil who takes naughty children away.

This would leave us quite fearful as children, as we had never seen Rupert. Our parents would tell us that they thought they heard bells when we were naughty and wondered if Rupert was coming. This produced an immediate response and resulted in us hiding from Rupert and/or being on our best behaviour.

I received a 'Rute' once on St. Nicholas Day with only a few small chocolates stuck to it and I promised to behave much better. The good thing was that St. Nicholas would come back the following night to leave something for the children who apologised.

I understand that some of the remains of Saint Nicholas are kept in the 11th century Basilica di San Nicola in Bari, a port city in Italy on the Adriatic Sea. The Basilica is a key pilgrimage site. Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of sailors, merchants, archers, thieves, children and students.

Wishing you all many happy St. Nicholas Days.

Christa Freer

A PILGRIMAGE TO ETHIOPIA

I have travelled with McCabe pilgrimages several times and was browsing their website when a January 2019 trip to Ethiopia caught my eye. I knew very little about the country except for having heard of the famous rock-cut churches, and of Lucy, when she was found to be the oldest humanlike skeleton. I found out it would be a small group, only 10 of us, a nice size for travelling round in a minibus. The itinerary looked hectic. We would be visiting many churches of historic and Christian interest and also spending some time in the mountains with a chance seeing baboons. I was intrigued and went ahead and booked, and in October was on an overnight flight to Ethiopia.

Day 1

Our first visit was to Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa, my first experience of Orthodox Ethiopian Christianity. It was the Feast day of the Trinity, which in Ethiopia is celebrated on the 7th day of each month. Even though a service was happening, we were allowed in, shoes off and head



covered. The church was packed with worshippers, the majority dressed in white, the men on one side and the women on the other. Worshippers sit on the floor or stand, a custom common to Orthodox religions. Chanting came from a group of priests and deacons at the back of the cathedral. They were playing drums and sistra, and banging their staffs on the floor. They were very happy to let the male members of our group have a go with the sistra, but not the female! Items used in worship often have a meaning. One end of the drum is larger than the other to represent Mary's womb and there is a stone inside to represent Christ within it.

The services in Ethiopia sermons last many hours with chanting, hymn singing and sermons; Communion takes place at the end. For someone to take Communion they have to have fasted that day and To have been in the service for at least three hours.